

Probation and Trial Periods

An employee must serve a probation period during the first year of his/her first permanent Federal appointment to determine fitness for continued employment. This probation is an extension and continuation of the merit system competitive examination process required for initial entry into Federal civilian service.

During this probationary period, the supervisor must evaluate the employee's job performance and work behavior, as well as his/her character, conduct, and attitude that directly affect job performance. Throughout the period the supervisor should document performance and conduct activity in the Supervisor's Employee Work Folder.

Prior to the end of the one-year probation period, the Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF) will notify the supervisor of the requirement for a written certification of the probationer's performance. If the supervisory certification is not timely, an employee who does not deserve continued employment may attain that status by default.

If an employee fails to successfully complete the probation period, then the supervisor must take action early on to consult with the CPF on options available. Options may include reassignment, demotion, or separation.

COMMON QUESTIONS:

1. Can the Initial Probationary or Trial Period be extended?

No. Normally, the probationary period ends on the day before the anniversary of the appointment. There is an exception in which the period may be extended. Nonpay time in excess of 22 workdays extends the probationary period by an equal amount, unless the nonpay time is due to a compensable injury, or military service, in which case the time is fully creditable upon the employee's restoration to Federal service.

2. What are the Difference Between a Probationary Period and a Trial Period?

Both constitute the first year of appointment and both are intended to determine fitness for continued Federal service. The probationary period applies to employees who are given a career or career-conditional appointment, whereas trial period applies to certain time-limited appointments of more than one year, such as a TERM appointment. As with the probationary employee, an agency may terminate a trial period employee at any time during the trial period if the employee has performance or conduct problems.

3. If an Employee Completed a Probation During Prior Federal Service, is Another Probationary Period Required Upon a New Appointment?

A new probationary period is required if the employee is again hired from a civil service register. It must be noted that an employee who previously completed probation in prior Federal service may be hired using reinstatement procedures, thereby avoiding the requirement for a new probationary period.

References:

AFI 36-1001, Managing the Civilian Performance Program
5 CFR 315, Career and Career-Conditional Employment

Supervisory or Managerial Probation Period

An employee must serve a probation period before initial assignment as either a supervisor or manager becomes final. It applies when assigned to their first supervisory or managerial position. Length of the probation period is normally one year, but may not be less than six months.

After selection, the employee is notified of the requirement to successfully complete a probation period. Second level supervisors/managers are required to provide guidance and training on supervisory and managerial skills and techniques to subordinate supervisors who are on probation. Performance monitoring must be done using the normal performance plan and it is recommended that periodic performance discussions are accomplished and documented.

The Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF) must be notified as soon as it becomes clear that the employee lacks the necessary aptitude or skill required in the position. If the employee does not satisfactorily complete the probation, he/she has a right to be returned to a non-supervisory or non-managerial position of no lower grade and pay than the previous non-supervisory position held.

Prior to the end of the probation period the second level supervisor will be asked to certify the successful completion of the employee's probation period. This certification is retained in the employee's Official Personnel Folder maintained at the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach Air Base.

COMMON QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Purpose of the Supervisory/Managerial Probation, and What Happens if the Employee Fails the Probation?

The purpose is to determine whether the employee has the skills necessary for continued service as a supervisor or manager. Failure to complete this probationary period means the employee must be returned to a non-supervisory or non-managerial position of no lower grade and pay than the one left. Furthermore, such a demotion is not considered an adverse action, and the employee has only limited rights to appeal the action. A key point to remember is that demotion to a non-supervisory or non-managerial position can only be for reason directly related to performance as a supervisor or manager. If the demotion is for other reasons, the agency must use adverse action procedures to effect the demotion.

2. Can an Employee be Required to Serve Both a Supervisory/Managerial Probationary Period and a "New-Employee" Probationary Period?

Yes. The probation on initial appointments to Federal service takes precedence, which means that failure to complete either type of probation (when serving both concurrently) requires termination.

References:

AFI 36-1001, Managing the Civilian Performance Program
5 CFR 315, Career and Career-Conditional Employment